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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TOKYO 12914

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: JA, PINT, ELAB
SUBJECT: IS JAPAN TEACHERS UNION MOVING TOWARDS MODERATION?

1. SUMMARY: 652,000-MEMBER NIKKYOSO (JAPAN TEACHERS UNION) JAPAN'S MOST CONTROVERSIAL LABOR ORGANIZATION IN POSTWAR PERIOD, HAS PRESENTED PUBLIC IMAGE OF EXTREME LEFT-WING POLITICAL MILITANCY, BOTH INSIDE CLASSROOM AND OUT, WHILE ALLEGEDLY IGNORING SERIOUS DEFICIENCIES IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. AFTER THREE DECADES OF LARGELY SUCCESSFUL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO WEAKEN ITS INFLUENCE AND GENERALLY INEFFECTUAL OPPOSITION ON ITS PART TO RULING LDP POLICIES, PARTICULARLY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS FIELD, NIKKYOSO'S MEMBERSHIP IS DECLINING AND ITS SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP IS UNDER ATTACK FROM SEVERAL DIRECTIONS INSIDE UNION.
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DURING LAST FEW YEARS, IN EFFORT TO MAINTAIN HOLD ON UNION, PRESIDENT MAKIEDA, A MODERATE, HAS PERSUADED MORE RADICAL SOCIALISTS AMONG LEADERSHIP TO ABANDON PREOCCUPATION WITH FOREIGN POLICY IN FAVOR OF ISSUES OF DIRECT CONCERN TO TEACHERS. AS DEMONSTRATED AT LAST MONTH'S CONVENTION, NIKKYOSO, WITHOUT ENTIRELY DISCARDING OLD MARXIST SLOGANS,

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HAS EMBARKED SOMEWHAT HESITANTLY ON NEW APPROACH WHICH IN-
VOLVES EFFORT TO INSTITUTE DIALOGUE WITH CONSERVATIVE GOVERN-
MENT AT HOME AND MORE CONTACTS WITH TEACHERS UNIONS IN
WESTERN DEMOCRACIES. NEW POLICY HAS SO FAR SHOWN MIXED
RESULTS. GOJ, AFTER DEMONSTRATING SOME INTEREST IN DIALOGUE
UNDER MIKI CABINET, HAS NOW REVERTED TO POLITICALLY POPULAR
HARD LINE TOWARDS UNION. U.S. TEACHERS UNION, HOWEVER,
HAVE RESPONDED MORE POSITIVELY TO NIKKYOSO'S OVERTURES AND
HAVE THEREBY HELPED TO BOOST MAKIEDA'S PRESTIGE SOMEWHAT.
IF MAKIEDA FAILS, BECAUSE OF QUARRELING WITHIN LEADERSHIP,
ADDITIONAL PROVOCATION FROM GOJ, REBUFFS FROM WESTERN
UNIONS OR COMBINATION OF THESE FACTORS, THERE IS STRONG
POSSIBILITY OF HIS BEING FORCED TO STEP DOWN. HIS REPLACE-
MENT, WHILE UNDOUBTEDLY YOUNGER, WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE
MORE PRAGMATIC. THEREFORE, WHILE MAKIEDA'S APPROACH TO
REFORM OFTEN APPEARS TENTATIVE AND VACILLATING, HE REPRESENTS
BEST HOPE THAT NIKKYOSO WILL NOT REVERT TO EXTREME-LEFT
POLICIES OF PAST. END SUMMARY.

2. EVER SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 1947, SOHYO-AFFILIATED
NIKKYOSO (JAPAN TEACHERS UNION), JAPAN'S SECOND LARGEST
LABOR ORGANIZATION, WITH 652,000 MEMBERS, HAS BEEN NATION'S
MOST CONTROVERSIAL UNION. ENORMOUS INFLUENCE AND AGGRESSIVE
MILITANCY OF NIKKYOSO IN IMMEDIATE POSTWAR PERIOD HAVE
BEEN REDUCED STEADILY IN LAST TWO DECADES. IT IS NO
LONGER THE BETE NOIRE IT WAS TWO DECADES
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AGO, WHEN MANY JAPANESE VIEWED IT AS THE MOST DANGEROUS
THREAT ON THE LEFT TO ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS. NEVER-
THELESS, UNION CONTINUES TO AROUSE PASSIONS ACROSS
POLITICAL SPECTRUM.

3. PART OF NIKKYOSO'S PROBLEM DERIVES FROM FACT THAT MANY
JAPANESE OPPOSE CONCEPT OF UNIONIZATION OF TEACHERS AND
STILL RECALL WITH NOSTALGIA PREWKR SYSTEM, IN WHICH TEACH-
ERS WERE EXPECTED TO ACT AS SERVANTS OF STATE AND IMPERIAL
AUTHORITY. OTHER JAPANESE, WHILE ACCEPTING RIGHT OF
TEACHERS TO ORGANIZE, BELIEVE THAT NIKKYOSO IS AVOWEDLY
MARXIST ORGANIZATION WHICH USES CLASSROOM TO PROPAGATE
REVOLUTIONARY LEFT-WING VALUES. STRONG MEMORIES PERSIST
OF NIKKYOSO'S ACTIVITIES IN FIFTIES, WHEN IT SPEARHEADED
OPPOSITION TO PEACE TREATY, CREATION OF SELF-DEFENSE
FORCES AND REVISION OF MUTUAMSSECURITY TREATY WITH U.S.,
AND IN SIXTIES WHEN IT DEMONSTRATED FOR ABROGATION OF
SECURITY TREATY AND AGAINST U.S. ROLE IN VIETNAM.
ON STILL ANOTHER FRONT, MEDIA AND MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD
POLITICAL PARTIES CHARGED THAT NIKKYOSO HAS NEGLECTED TASK
AT HAND--REFORM OF OVERCROWDED, UNIMAGINATIVE, BRUTALLY
COMPETITIVE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM--IN FAVOR OF POLITICAL

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CAMPAIGNING ON BEHALF OF SOCIALIST CANDIDATES. ABOVE AND BEYOND THESE SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS HAS BEEN GENERAL FEELING, MOST OFTEN VOICED BY JAPAN'S "EDUCATION MOTHERS," ("KYOIKU MAMA") THAT TEACHERS ARE SOMEHOW RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF THE DEFICIENCIES IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.

4. EXTREME RIGHT-WING GROUPS, GENERALLY ADVOCATING RETURN TO PREWAR POLITICAL SYSTEM AND SEEING COMMUNIST INSPIRATION BEHIND EVERY POSTWAR REFORM, HAVE MADE NIKKYOSO'S ANNUAL CONVENTIONS THEIR SPECIAL TARGET. ALTHOUGH FEW IN NUMBER,

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BY MEANS OF NOISY AND OCCASIONALLY VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS, THEY HAVE SUCCEEDED IN PUBLICIZING THEIR VIEW THAT NIKKYOSO IS SUBVERSIVE RADICAL ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO DESTRUCTION OF JAPAN'S TRADITIONAL VALUES. OF MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANCE, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN GOJ'S SLOW BUT STEADY USE, OVER LAST TWO DECADES, OF CARROT AND STICK POLICY DESIGNED BOTH TO MODIFY (AND SOMETIMES REVERSE) U.S.-INSPIRED OCCUPATION ERA REFORMS IN EDUCATIONAL FIELD AND TO WEAKEN NIKKYOSO'S INFLUENCE OVER TEACHERS. ON ONE HAND, GOVERNMENT HAS MOVED TO LESSEN CONTROL OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS OVER CIRRICULUM AND TEACHING MATERIALS AND TO REGULATE MORE

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STRICTLY TEACHERS' CONDUCT IN CLASSROOM AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES. ON OTHER HAND, IT HAS GREATLY IMPROVED TEACHERS SALARIES AND FRINGE BENEFITS AND BROUGHT MORE TEACHERS INTO ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS. 1974 LAW RAISED
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COMBINED SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES OF MANY TEACHERS TO MORE THAN 20 PERCENT ABOVE THOSE OF AVERAGE CIVIL SERVANT. RECENT REVIVAL OF PREWAR "SHUNIN" SYSTEM, WHEREBY TEACHERS ROTATE AS SUPERVISORS (IN POSITION ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL IN U.S. SCHOOLS) ALSO CARRIES WITH IT SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCE. AT SAME TIME, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MOE) HAS DENIED NIKKYOSO RIGHT TO RECRUIT NEWLY HIRED TEACHERS WHILE THEY ARE ENROLLED IN INITIAL ORIENTATION COURSE AND ALLEGEDLY HAS ENCOURAGED FORMATION OF SPLINTER UNIONS OPPOSED TO NIKKYOSO'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND ILLEGAL-STRIKE POLICY. FURTHERMORE, VARIOUS LDP GOVERNMENTS HAVE FOUND IT POLITICALLY PROFITABLE, ISPECIALLY JUST BEFORE ELECTIONS, TO FIND SOME PRETEXT TO CRACKDOWN ON NIKKYOSO (USUALLY WITH CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY). FOR EXAMPLE, JUST BEFORE THE 1974 UPPER HOUSE ELECTION, IN WHICH LDP THOUGHT IT MIGHT LOSE ITS PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, TANAKA CABINET ORDERED ARREST OF NIKKYOSO PRESIDNET MAKIEDA AND OTHER UNION OFFICERS FOR ORGANIZING ILLEGAL STRIKE DURING SPRING WAGE CAMPAIGN BUT IGNORED SIMILAR ACTIONS BY LEADERS OF OTHER SOHYO PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS.

5. OVER THE YEARS, NIKKYOSO'S RESPONSE TO CONSERVATIVE PARTY ATTACKS AND MOE POLICIES APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN LARGELY SELF-DEFEATING. UNION'S UNPRODUCTIVE POLITICAL STRUGGLES AGAINST GOJ'S POLICY OF CLOSE TIES (INCLUDING MILITARY TREATY) WITH U.S., ITS FLIRTATION WITH TEACHERS ORGANIZATIONS AND SO-CALLED "PEACE MOVEMENTS" IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, AND ITS LARGELY RHETORICAL CAMPAIGN FOR RIGHT TO STRIKE HAVE ALL BUT OBSCURED ITS EFFORTS TO DEFEND POSTWAR EDUCATIONAL REFORMS, TO CHAMPION EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY DERIVED FROM JOHN DEWEY, TO MAINTAIN SPECIAL CLASSES FOR GIFTED CHILDREN, AND TO IMPROVE CURRENT SCHOOL SYSTEM BY
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INTRODUCING FIVE-DAY WEEK AND LOWER STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO. WITH GOJ HAVING SUCCESSFULLY STAMPED RADICAL LABEL ON NIKKYOSO, WHATEVER UNION CHAMPIONS CAN NOW EASILY BE DISCREDITED IN EYES OF PUBLIC WHOSE SYMPATHIES HAVE MOVED SUBTLY TO RIGHT.

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6. AS A RESULT, AFTER TWO DECADES OF FURIOUS BUT LARGELY FRUITLESS ACTIVITY, NIKKYOSO'S MILITANCY HAS NOW BEGUN TO EBB. NIKKYOSO LEADERSHIP REMAINS STRONG ADVOCATE OF STRIKING TO ACHIEVE UNION GOALS, BUT IT CAN NOW WIN STRIKE VOTES (EVEN FOR NON-CLASS HOUR WALKOUTS WHICH DO NOT DIRECTLY AFFECT CHILDREN'S EDUCATION) IN LESS THAN 20 OUT OF 52 PREFECTUAL CHAPTERS. ONE REASON IS THAT INCREASING NUMBER OF YOUNGER TEACHERS HAVE REFUSED TO JOIN UNION, SUPPOSEDLY BECAUSE OF RELATIVE SATISFACTION WITH THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS AND THEIR REJECTION OF NIKKYOSO'S LEFT-WING POLITICS. ADMITTEDLY, NIKKYOSO'S 652,000 MEMBERS STILL CONSTITUTE 73 PERCENT OF ALL ORGANIZED TEACHERS, RIVAL, MORE RADICAL 47,600 MEMBER HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS UNION (NIKKOKYO), AS WELL AS CONSERVATIVE DOMEI-AFFILIATED NEW TEACHERS UNION (SHINKYOSO) WITH ONLY 4,400 MEMBERS, HAVING GROWN LITTLE IN RECENT YEARS. NEVERTHELESS, NIKKYOSO WHICH REPRESENTED 86 PERCENT OF ALL TEACHERS IN 1958, NOW REPRESENTS ONLY 56 PERCENT. MOREOVER, IN 1977, PERCENTAGE OF NEWLY EMPLOYED TEACHERS JOINING NIKKYOSO DROPPED FOR FIRST TIME BELOW 50 PERCENT (FIVE YEARS AGO, RATE WAS 78 PERCENT).

7. ANOTHER REASON FOR DECLINE IN NIKKYOSO MILITANCY HAS BEEN INFLUENCE OF JAPAN COMMUNIST PARTY (JCP) MINORITY WITHIN ORGANIZATION. BY ARGUING PUBLICLY THAT EDUCATPEN OF YOUNG IS "SACRED PROFESSION," AND THAT NIKKYOSO SHOULD THEREFORE REFRAIN FROM STRIKES UNLESS IT HAS EXPLICIT BACKING OF PARENT GROUPS, JCP HAS SUCCESSFULLY USED ORGANIZATION TO RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS FROM AMONG IDEALISTIC

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LEFT-WING TEACHERS WHO OPPOSE STRIKING, AS WELL AS FROM NAIVE PARENTS, WHO APPARENTLY VIEW COMMUNISTS AS STABLE CONSERVATIVE FORCE IN TEACHING WORLD. WHILE COMMUNISTS HAVE FAILED TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOAL OF MODIFYING UNION'S POLICY TO SUPPORT ONLY SOCIALIST PARTY CANDIDATES IN ELECTIONS (RESOLUTIONS AT ANNUAL CONVENTIONS IN FAVOR OF FREEDOM OF POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT HAVE NEVER RECEIVED BACKING OF MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF TEACHER DELEGATES), JCP HARASSMENT OF UNION EXECUTIVES ON SUCH ISSUES AS SANCTITY OF TEACHING PROFESSION HAS CERTAINLY WEAKENED NIKKYOSO'S SOLIDARITY. NET RESULT OF CONSTANT POLITICAL SQUABBLING HAS BEEN TO RECONFIRM LONG-TIME PUBLIC IMAGE OF NIKKYOSO AS "RED-HEADED CRANE."

8. NEED TO ASSERT LEADERSHIP IN FACE OF COMMUNIST
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CHALLENGE HAS PROVIDED MAJOR IMPETUS BEHIND MAKIEDA'S EFFORT TO INTRODUCE LARGE DOSE OF PRAGMATISM INTO UNION'S POLICIES. ON DOMESTIC FRONT, TEACHER'S BRIEF HONEYMOON WITH MIKI CABINET IN 1975 ENDED IN STILL UNRESOLVED CONFRONTATION OVER SHUNIN AND STRIKE-RIGHT ISSUES. HOWEVER, MAKIEDA HAS MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN SHIFTING EMPHASIS IN NIKKYOSO'S INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS FROM COMMUNIST BLOC TEACHERS ORGANIZATIONS TO COUNTERPARTS IN DEMOCRATIC NATIONS. HE HAS JUSTIFIED THIS APPROACH ON GROUNDS THAT NIKKYOSO HAS MUCH TO LEARN TACTICALLY FROM AGGRESSIVE TEACHERS UNIONS IN U.S. AND WESTERN EUROPE AND LITTLE TO GAIN FROM FRATERNIZING WITH GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED ORGANIZATIONS IN COMMUNIST CAMP. NIKKYOSO'S CAMPAIGN TO GAIN GOJ ACCEPTANCE OF ILO GUIDELINES ON LABOR STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS HAS ALSO BEEN USED TO JUSTIFY GREATER TIES TO WESTERN UNIONS SUPPORTING SIMILAR OBJECTIVES. SUCH ARGUMENTS HAVE WON OVER EVEN NIKKYOSO'S FAR-LEFT SOCIALISM ASSOCIATION LED BY SECGEN NAKAKOJI.

9. MOST DRAMTIC RAPPROACHEMENT HAS BEEN
WITH AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS (AFT). MAKIEDA INVITED AFT PRESIDENT SHANKER TO NIKKYOSO'S 1975 CONVENTION, MET WITH HIM IN WASHINTON IN 1976, AND, AFTER RECEIPT OF INVITATION FROM AFT, OBTAINED UNION APPROVAL FOR SECGEN

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NAKAKOJI TO ACCEPT LABOR EXCHANGE PROGRAM GRANT IN 1977, MARKING FIRST TIME THAT NIKKYOSO NATIONAL OFFICER HAD ACCEPTED USG GRANT IN OVER 15 YEARS. LAST YEAR SAW FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF NIKKYOSO-AFT TIE, WITH SHANKER APPEARING AT 1977 NIKKYOSO CONVENTION AND AFT VICE PRESIDENT SANDRA FELDMAN BEING RECEIVED BY SEVERAL HITHERTO UNAPPROACHABLE NIKKYOSO CHAPTERS IN KYOTO AND OSAKA.

10. HOWEVER, AS MOST RECENT ANNUAL CONVENTION (JUNE 6-9)
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MADE CLEAR, NIKKYOSO'S PROGRESS IN THESE AREAS REMAINS MODEST AT BEST. TO BE SURE, CONVENTION ADOPTED ACTION POLICY EMPHASIZING NIKKYOSO'S GOALS IN EDUCATION FIELD WHILE PLAHING DOWN INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, AND ALSO VOTED TO CONTINUE STUDYING MEMBERSHIP IN WESTERN, DEMOCRATIC-ORIENTED INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF FREE TEACHERS UNIONS (IFFTU) WITHOUT, HOWEVER, COMMITTING ITSELF TO JOINING ORGANIZATION. ON OTHER HAND, ACTION POLICY CONTINUED AS IN PAST TO GIVE LIP SERVICE TO VARIOUS IDEALOGICAL CRUSADES AND CONVENTION DEBATE CENTERED AS USUAL ON DECADES-OLD ISSUE OF WHETHER UNION SHOULD SUPPORT ONLY SOCIALISTS AT POLLS OR ALLOW MEMBERS "FREEDOM OF CHOICE," EUPHEMISTIC WAY OF DESCRIBING POLICY PERMITTING COMMUNIST ACCESS TO UNION FUNDS AND CAMPAIGN WORKERS. ENERGY EXPENDED BY SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP IN DEFEATING RESOLUTION THAT WOULD WEAKEN NIKKYOSO'S JSP COMMITMENT PREVENTED SIGNIFICANT DEBATE ON ISSUES OF CONCERN TO PUBLIC SUCH AS STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO IN CLASSROOMS, SPECIAL CLASSES FOR PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY HANDICAPPED, TEACHERS' RIGHT-TO-STRIKE AND WISDOM OF SHUNIN SYSTEM. THUS, MEDIA PORTRAYED NIKKYOSO AS CONCENTRATING AS USUAL ON OUTDATED POLITICAL ISSUES.

11. AS CONVENTION DEMONSTRATED, MAKIEDA'S ROOM FOR MANEUVER WITHIN NIKKYOSO REMAINS VERY LIMITED. HE CANNOT ABANDON OLD SLOGANS DEAR TO SOCIALISTS WITHOUT CAUSING SPLIT IN CURRENT LEADERSHIP. HE CANNOT MAKE FURTHER OVERTURES TO GOJ WITHOUT BEING ASSURED IN ADVANCE THAT WILL BE ACCEPTED. (MOREOVER, GIVEN CURRENT PUBLIC ANTIPATHY TOWARD NIKKYOSO, GOJ APPEARS UNLIKELY TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO ANY NIKKYOSO APPDOACH, APPARENTLY BELIEVING THAT IT CAN GAIN SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL CAPITAL BY MAINTAINING HARD LINE TOWARD UNION.) ONLY CONCRETE SUCCESS TO WHICH MAKIEDA CAN POINT SO FAR HAS BEEN NEW DIALOGUE OPENED WITH WESTERN UNIONS, PARTICULARLY

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AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS.

12. IF MAKIEDA'S EFFORTS TO INJECT MORE REALISM INTO NIKKYOSO'S POLICIES FAIL, THERE IS GOOD POSSIBILITY THAT HE WILL BE FORCED TO STEP DOWN AS NIKKYOSO PRESIDENT. IN SUCH EVENT, CHANCES ARE GREAT THAT A SUCCESSOR, WHILE DOUBTLESS YOUNGER, WOULD REVERT TO IDEOLOGICAL APPROACH OF PAST IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN UNIFIED SOCIALIST SUPPORT AND DEFEAT ANY COMMUNIST CHALLENGE. THUS MAKIEDA'S CONTINUATION AS NIKKYOSO'S PRESIDENT REMAINS BEST CHANCE, NO MATTER HOW SLIGHT, THAT NIKKYOSO WILL CONTINUE ITS HESITANT MOVE IN DIRECTION OF MODERATION.
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